



## TEXAS INDIGENT DEFENSE COMMISSION

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### **Governor's Criminal Justice Division Awards Grant to Texas Indigent Defense Commission**

Austin — The Texas Governor's Criminal Justice Division has approved a grant of \$26,800 to support the Texas Indigent Defense Commission's upcoming Indigent Defense Workshop for Texas county representatives next week. The workshop will be Monday and Tuesday.

"Texas counties are our primary constituency, and support from the Governor's Criminal Justice Division will be enormously helpful to offset costs to allow more counties the opportunity to participate," said Sharon Keller, the chair of the Indigent Defense Commission and presiding judge of the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals.

Since 2003 the Commission has provided annual workshops for county and court officials, public defenders and others involved in implementing indigent defense plans. These events provide opportunities to share the latest information on indigent defense in Texas, including changes in the law and lessons learned about operating more effective programs. Approximately 75-100 county representatives attend each year, representing approximately 25 counties.

"The Commission understands the budget pressures our counties face every day," said Commission Executive Director Jim Bethke. "By making this important training more accessible to county participants, the Governor's Criminal Justice Division will help equip county and court officials to improve and enhance their local indigent defense programs."

The workshop includes breakout sessions during which attendees can process what they have learned in the context of the needs of their particular county. Participating counties will identify indigent defense system goals and develop an action plan for either developing a new program or improving existing programs to increase their effectiveness.

"The opportunity for counties to share their experiences with one another benefits the entire criminal justice system," said Gene Terry, Executive Director of the Texas Association of Counties. "We appreciate the opportunity to partner with the Commission on the Indigent Defense Workshop, as well as the support of the Governor's Criminal Justice Division to defray county costs for participating."

This year's workshop will include a session on specialty court/defender programs, including mental health programs or veterans' programs to provide counties that operate such programs the opportunity to share their experiences with each other and other counties that may be considering similar efforts. Another session will focus on ways counties can collect and use information about their indigent defense system to improve and implement effective policies. For those that cannot attend, the grant will also support professional video recording and editing of the program, which will be made available on the Commission's [website](#).

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